



## QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION – THE FINNISH WAY

Finnish education thrives on quality. That is why Pearson plc, the world's leading educational company, has ranked Finland as the global #1 in educational attainment.<sup>1</sup> Quality is not only a key issue in the efficiency of education and training; it has also been an essential factor in providing equal opportunity for all and improving the attractiveness of post-primary education.

One of the factors that sent Finnish education soaring was a radical change in quality assurance roughly two decades ago. The FinnWayLearning educational consortium is ready to share the practices adapted and the lessons learned during Finland's journey to the top.

<sup>1</sup> *The Learning Curve: Lessons in Country Performance in Education, 2012 Report.* Pearson, London





## Quality Assurance: From External Control to Self-Evaluation

Up until the early 1990s, quality assurance in Finnish education was mainly based on school inspections, which were carried out to ensure that nationally set norms and regulations were observed properly. Today, the system is largely decentralized. At the national level, quality assurance is based on assessing learning outcomes; these assessments function as national benchmarks for education providers and form a basis for decisions concerning educational policy. Locally, the focus is on self-evaluation by teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders. Of special importance is the self-evaluation carried



out by students; this has been a successful tool in increasing their involvement in their own education and growth.

Put in simple terms, the responsibility for quality assurance now lies with everyone involved in the educational process. Education providers have a large amount of freedom in deciding on how to participate in quality management. Instead of direct external control, their activities are now steered mainly through information, support and funding.

## Quality Assurance as a Developmental Tool

The importance of quality assurance lies in its utility as a developmental tool. Various aids and toolkits have been devised for quality management at different educational levels; these help education providers evaluate their work and find their strengths as well as areas for improvement. They all have a single overarching goal: to provide the best in educational quality. In addition to delivering the best possible learning outcomes for those who graduate, this means maximizing graduation rates and minimizing the number of drop-outs.

## Quality: From Process to Outcome

Paying attention to quality at all stages of the educational process has paid off. OECD surveys in adult literacy provide just one example of this; they tell us that Finland can now claim the uncontested top spot in Europe (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies PIAAC, 2012), even though Finnish adults functioned at 'merely' above average European level less than two decades ago (International Adult Literacy Survey IALS, 1994-1998).

## What FinnWayLearning can offer

- study visits covering any aspect of the quality assurance system in Finnish education (prices start at €1000/day for a group of 10 or less)
- training for educational administrators, planners, and other professionals
- expert consultation

Please contact us to find out more!



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